

## 2.0 LITERARY RESEARCH ON COMPASSION

### 2.1 BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

Nurses contribute to the major portion of the health care team. Being a member of the health care team, they are equally responsible to provide quality health care to the patients. To accomplish this, nursing students should be equipped with both theoretical knowledge & practical skills. It is considered that empathy and compassion are professional qualities that nurses/nursing students should possess to provide quality health care to the patients. Empathy is an ability to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within the other person's point of view (Bellet & Maloney, 1991). Compassion is an action that motivates an individual to help others in relieving their suffering (Lopez, 2009). Before we could act on reducing pain or suffering of others it is essential to understand or feel what they are experiencing i.e., we should empathize first. So, empathy is a prerequisite for compassion. Being a nursing student/nurse only empathizing with patient is not adequate it is equally important to help them in alleviating their suffering by taking an appropriate action or intervention.

In our literary research, we have extracted the concept of compassion from the Bhagavadgita.

### 2.2 AIM

The main aim of the study was to understand the concept of compassion according to the Bhagavadgita.

## 2.3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Here we have referred to the chapters in the Srimad Bhagavadgita, that has explained about the concept of compassion. Meanwhile, we have also explained about the importance of compassion in the nursing profession. The following verses explain about the concept of Compassion according to the Bhagavadgita:

अद्वेषा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।

निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥१३॥

सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा द्रुढनिश्चयः ।

मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥१४॥

In chapter 12, verse 13 and 14 describe about the qualities of God-realized soul or an individualized who is God-realized.

He who is free from malice towards all beings, friendly and compassionate, rid of “I” and “Mine”, balanced in joy and sorry, forgiving by nature, ever contented and mentally united with Me, who has subdued his mind, senses, and body, has a firm resolve and has surrendered his mind and reason to Me- that devotee of mine is dear to Me.

The devotee who has realized God is not only free from malice towards all beings, but also their disinterested friend and naturally compassionate towards them. God realized soul sees unity everywhere. From the very beginning they are inclined towards developing virtues of “Maitrah” or “Friendliness” and “Karunah” or “Compassion”. God is embodiment of divine and compassion, similarly His devotee too who has attained perfection or God realized should possess these virtues.

The term “Nirmamah” and “Nirahankarah” explains that an enlightened soul shows same

feeling towards all, neither recognizes anyone as his own nor identifies himself with his own body. He treasures motiveless love for all and is compassionate towards all. A devotee who is on the way towards God-realization shows compassion and love to all, but not being completely without sense of “I” and “Mine”.

Here, compassion is considered as one of the quality of an Individual who is God-realized. The following verse is from chapter 16 verse 2, that describes about the characteristics one should possess i.e. Daivi sampad, in which Compassion or “Daya” is one quality.

अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागः शान्तिरपैशुनम् ।

दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम् ॥२॥

Non-violence in thought, word and deed, truthfulness and geniality of speech, absence of anger even on provocation, disowning in doer ship in respect of actions, composure of mind, abstaining from malicious gossip, compassion towards all creatures, absence of attachment to the objects of senses even during their contact with the senses, mildness, sense of shame in transgressing against the scriptures on usage, and abstaining from frivolous pursuits.

This verse describes what is compassion and how a compassionate individual feels and behave. The motive or urge an individual feel in his mind to relieve suffering or pain of any living being who is in distress, without expecting anything in return, to make him happy in every way is called as “Daya” or “Compassion”.

In Bhagavadgita, Compassion is elaborated as “Karunah” and “Daya”.

## 2.4 COMPASSION IN NURSING

Compassion (a focus on common good) is considered as one of the component that is part of concept of wisdom from Bhagavad Gita (Jeste & Vahia, 2008). In a study, students who were exposed to more stressful events reported higher compassion for others than compassion for themselves (Tholouli, Maridaki-Kassotaki, Varvogli, & Chrousos, 2016). However, providing care to the patients to alleviate suffering is not an easy task to carry out day-in and day-out rather this is a challenging situation for nurses/nursing students. Especially, in the clinical setting, nurses/nursing students are constantly exposed to the pain and suffering of the patients, this in turn increases the risk of developing compassion fatigue (Marcial et al., 2013; Sabo, 2006). Nevertheless, there was a decline in empathy (cognitive) among undergraduate nursing students, especially during their clinical posting (Ward, Cody, Schaal, & Hojat, 2012; Wilson et al., 2012).

Indeed, being empathic and compassionate during patient care is required, yet, the decline in empathy and experience of compassion fatigue is evident during the clinical experience. This needs to be addressed to protect self and to provide care to the patients. Here comes the role of self-compassion. Self-compassion is being warm and caring at times of hardship, being kind to self, accepting suffering or unpleasant experiences as they are and being non-judgmental (Neff, 2003). When an individual is compassionate towards self, he/she can be compassionate towards others during suffering (Neff, 2003). Both self-compassion and compassion are related to each other (Neff & Pommier, 2013).

There was a negative correlation between self-compassion and compassion fatigue and burnout among student midwives, cultivating compassion for self would aid in handling compassion fatigue and burnout (Beaumont, Durkin, Hollins Martin, & Carson, 2016).

Certainly, self-compassion reduces compassion fatigue and burnout, hence there should be more focus on the interventions that would improve self-compassion among health care professionals (Duarte, Pinto-Gouveia, & Cruz, 2016). Our experimental study was designed with an aim to evaluate the effect of an 8-week yoga on self-compassion.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

In the Bhagavadgita, compassion is elaborated as “Karunah” and “Daya”, quality of a “God-realized soul” and one of the quality that is mentioned as “Daivi sampad” respectively. In nursing compassion is core to the professional requirement and they are expected to provide compassionate care to the patients. However, “Karunah” and “Daya”, can be cultivated or developed, also there is a need to be compassionate towards self to meet professional demands.